

crest and distinguishing white breast with the dark border below were clearly visible. In flight, 2 to 3 white patches were noticed in the area of the secondaries, on both sides of the black rump.

The bird was solitary and feeding from the pole, it would glide into the weeds, land for a few seconds, pick up the prey and fly back to the pole with two or three lazy wingbeats. The whole action was highly reminiscent of an Indian roller. Eating of the prey could not be observed nor its identification made. The bird was observed for

nearly half an hour. Other birds sharing the habitat were purple herons (*Ardea purpurea*) cormorants (*Phalacrocorax* sp.) whiskered terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*), pond herons (*Ardeola grayii*) eastern swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and brahminy kites (*Haliastur indus*).

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10. ROOSTING BEHAVIOUR OF INDIAN PEAFOWL *PAVO CRISTATUS*

Roost site selection plays a pivotal role in the nesting success of any species. Judicious selection of the roosting site may enhance the survival of birds, by virtue of reduced heat loss, information sharing, accountability of population, and better protection from predators. (Tast and Rassi 1973, Gyllin *et al.* 1977, Gadgil and Ali 1975, Gadgil 1972).

The Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), a common bird in India, is known to roost in trees and large buildings at night. Though several papers have been written on the roosting behaviour of peafowl, detailed studies on roost site selection have only recently been carried out by Trivedi and Johnsingh (1996) in Gir forest.

On July 27, 1997, during our move to Sasan from Malanka village, near Madhuvanti dam on a 5 km stretch of road, we observed 28 electric poles of which 20 (71.42%) were occupied by Indian peafowl for roosting. To study the significance of this height as a preferable roost on the periphery of the Gir National Park, detailed observations were made on the birds roosting on the poles.

All the poles were examined carefully and the top part of each pole was categorised under 3 different roosting subsites i.e. (1) peak of the pole (2) top of the wire (3) three layers of horizontal bars. The number of peafowl occurring in each roosting site were recorded from 1915 to 2000 hrs till it became completely dark. On either

side of the road there were a few crop fields and fallow land, but most of the area had forest cover.

Out of 16 poles used for roosting by 22 long trained (LT) birds, 13 (59.09%) roosted on top of the wire, 3 (13.64%) on the pole top and 6 (27.27%) over horizontal bars (Table 1). This top position of roosting was significantly preferred over horizontal bars ($X^2 = 8.08$, $P < 0.005$).

Out of total 45 short trained (ST) birds occupying 9 poles, 26 (57.77%) roosted on horizontal bars, whereas 17 (37.80%) roosted on wire and only 2 (4.44%) on pole peak (Table 1). This shows that there was no preference for horizontal bars ($X^2 = 1.08$, $0.25 < P < .50$).

Seven poles were occupied by a single LT bird exclusively, whereas on 6 poles one LT bird and other ST birds were recorded. On the other hand, on only two poles were 2 or more LT males roosting with ST birds.

Distribution of LT birds on a greater number of poles might be a behavioural adaptation to avoid predation risk. On the other hand, ST birds never roosted singly on a single pole. Furthermore, 4 poles were occupied only by ST birds.

Trivedi and Johnsingh (1996) have established that within the Gir National Park, peafowl preferred high trees. In view of their findings, we presume that all peafowl of the area should be roosting on the poles (the safest site in

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

TABLE I
PEAFOWL COUNT ON ELECTRIC POLES

No. of Poles	Position occupied by long trained (LT) birds			Total	Position occupied by short trained (ST) birds			Total
	Pole peak	Wire	Horizontal bar		Pole peak	Wire	Horizontal bar	
8	01	06	05	12	02	10	19	31
7	02	04	01	07				
1	-	03	-	03				
4					-	07	07	14
20	03	13	06	22	02	17	26	45

view of the height). The leopard *Panthera pardus* is an important predator of peafowl in Gir forest (Trivedi and Johnsingh 1996). Preference for high trees for roosting was attributed to the danger from this ground predator, which can climb trees. Roosting on high tension electric poles is much safer, as leopards and other predators cannot climb on to them.

The data shows that long trained birds were more safety conscious than short trained ones, as they preferred wire against horizontal bars. For an LT bird it is extremely difficult to maintain a balance against high winds at heights of 50 m. During July, wind speed in this area ranges from 15-20 km/hr. To roost on wire rather than on the horizontal bars of the poles expends greater energy. Despite this, most of the LT peafowl preferred the wires indicating that predation pressure in the periphery of the sanctuary must be very high. The predation pressures on LT birds could be much more than on ST birds, as is reflected in site preference on the poles.

Further, this behaviour indicates adaptability of the species to a modified habitat. Such man-made structures, if installed within a sanctuary, would protect peafowl from predators like the leopard, which ultimately may have certain management implications. We do not know whether some peafowl were also roosting on the trees in the same area.

The observed roosting behaviour provides safety against predators but makes the peafowl vulnerable to local hunters known as 'Dafers', as birds on the pole are easy to shoot (P.P. Raval,

pers. comm.). It seems that peafowl require protection from ground predators (not necessarily leopards) as we have seen them roosting on electric poles in some parts of Kheda dist. and also near Samakhiyali (Kachchh) on September 28, 1992 along with black ibises *Pseudibis papillosa*. Neither in Kheda nor in Kachchh does the leopard exist, yet these two species were roosting on poles. The advantage of a high roost site is obvious (Yom-Tov 1979).

On July 26, 1997, we saw peafowl roosting on khejri *Prosopis cineraria* within a cattle egret heronry along the state highway at Bagodara (Ahmedabad dist.). All roosting behaviour described (including pole roosting) were recorded from the road side where there is always vehicular traffic. It seems that in the selection of roosting sites, safety against predators is more important than the disturbance due to vehicular traffic.

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11. SIGHTING OF THE INDIAN REDBREASTED PARAKEET AT ANDHERI

On the evening of December 7, 1997 at 1630 hrs, I was at the residence of a friend at Andheri (West) Mumbai, when I heard an unusual call among the calls of the rose ringed parakeet. On investigation, I found it to be a parakeet quite unlike any I had seen before. I watched the bird through my binoculars. With the help of a field guide, I was able to identify it as the male of the Indian redbreasted parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*.

The bird was perched on top of a tree along with three other males of the same type. I observed them for a total of 10 minutes, after

which they flew away. I spotted them again at about 1730 hrs, flying about in the same region. They were moving in a group making loud calls. They flew independent of the rose ringed parakeets, though there were plenty of the latter in the region.

These must have been escaped caged birds.

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12. ALBINO MYNA (*ACRIDOTHERES TRISTIS*) NEAR VITA, IN MAHARASHTRA

Near Vita in Sangli dist., Maharashtra, I saw a nest of the common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) with two eggs. Both eggs hatched, and one was a pure albino. Both the chicks were successfully raised. The beak and legs were yellow.

A number of insects were successfully devoured by the albino myna. After fledging, the

entire family flew away to a neighbouring hill (Sulkai).

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13. BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *ACROCEPHALUS DUMETORUM* FEEDING ON NECTAR

During my field visit to Ponmudi in Trivandrum forest division of Kerala Western

Ghats on February 8, 1996, I observed several species of birds, namely grey drongo *Dicrurus*